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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (LAC) REGION

U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE PUBLICATION
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FY 2009 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE GOALS

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) delivers assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through 16 bilateral missions, 3 sub-regional missions, and a regional program managed from Washington (LAC Regional). This publication focuses on LAC Regional. The United States Government (USG) and the LAC region's overall goals are to reduce poverty and income inequality through expanded economic and educational opportunities; improve democratic governance, government responsiveness, and security in the region; build the region's capacity to respond effectively to global crises (food, energy, financial, epidemics) and natural disasters; and promote responsible stewardship to protect environmentally sensitive areas and combat global climate change.

The three sectors outlined below – Governing Justly and Democratically, Investing in People and Economic Growth – highlight many of the successes of the LAC Regional program during FY 2009. Ongoing support of many of these initiatives will guarantee their stability and sustainability. The LAC Regional program is committed and determined to ensure that democracy continues to spread throughout the hemisphere, to ensure that the levels of child mortality continue to decline, and to increase the economic prospects of people throughout the region by expanding the principles of free trade while sustainably managing their environmental resources.

HIGHLIGHTS BY PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Governing Justly and Democratically

The region has sustained many democratic gains made over the last 20 years. Every government in the region – with the exception of Cuba – has been democratically elected. The Inter-American Democratic Charter, which sets regional norms for democracy, is a model for the rest of the developing world. Additionally, most LAC countries have dramatically reformed their criminal justice systems, increasing their efficiency and effectiveness.

Programs discussed in this publication are funded through the U.S. Agency for International Development. The Department of State does not provide assistance to LAC.

Through its programs in FY 2009, USG support has:

- Supported AmericasBarometer, a survey of democratic attitudes and behaviors across the region. The surveys and related analytical reports focus particularly on citizens' values and experiences related to a range of topics from justice, to crime victimization, and trust in state institutions.
- Strengthened the region's electoral management bodies through the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIDH), an organization that monitors human rights and serves as the secretariat for electoral bodies in the region
- Built institutional capacity and long-term sustainability of IIDH to implement a new strategic focus on human rights and poverty through an electoral lens. Since April 2009, the LAC Regional program has supported IIDH electoral observation missions in three countries, supported conferences among the region's electoral authorities, and provided technical assistance for the institutionalization, democratization, and transparency of political parties in the region.
- Supported avenues for meaningful public participation and oversight as well as government capacity to perform with transparency and integrity

Investing in People

The region has made substantial progress in health; child mortality has dropped more than 45 percent over the past 15 years, and in the past five years, infant mortality has fallen by more than 13 percent. Large disparities in health persist in the region between rich and poor. In education, approximately 25,000 teachers in 16 countries have been trained, benefiting about 660,000 children.

Through its regional programs, USG has:

- Developed country action plans to reduce the neonatal mortality rate. These action plans have been approved by all 41 Ministers of Health at the annual meeting of the Pan American Health Organization.
- Helped achieve targets set for fertility and contraceptive prevalence rates in seven LAC countries. This qualifies these countries for phase-out of USAID-supported family planning programs.
- Expanded access to public and non-governmental organization HIV/AIDS counseling and training services, finalized a study of male sexuality and HIV, assessed sexually transmitted infection and HIV/AIDS laboratories, and provided technical assistance to develop treatment protocols
- Collaborated with the Pan-American Health Organization on tuberculosis control activities through a grant to improve primary health care and the quality of health services in the Americas
- Advanced the elimination of unregulated tuberculosis medications and sub-standard drugs from private pharmacies
- Strengthened teacher and administrator teaching skills, expanded regional workforce skills, and provided key information relevant to education policy reform

- Published one national education report card, began work on five additional national report cards and numerous publications, and collaborated on more than 100 national and international education meetings with local partners.

Economic Growth

The region has seen significant progress in the area of economic growth. Four free-trade agreements are now in force in Chile, Mexico (with the North American Free Trade Agreement), Central America and the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR), and Peru. Two more agreements are pending in Colombia and Panama. Since 1997, exports from LAC countries to the United States have nearly tripled in value. USAID programs in seven countries have benefited more than 8,000 firms with over 70,000 employees.

In addition, USAID environment programs have invested considerable resources into strengthening an environment that enables sustainable natural resource management in this resource-rich region. Actions range from improving environmental governance to implementing best practices and supporting legal land rights. In FY 2009, USAID environment programs contributed to the improved management of over five million hectares of biologically significant land throughout Latin America. LAC Regional's programs supported over a third of this work by contributing to the improvement of 1.4 million hectares of biologically significant land.

Through its regional programs, the USG has:

- Leveraged a larger World Bank/International Finance Corporation program to provide six Eastern Caribbean countries with legal and regulatory reform road maps to improve trade and investment climate

- Completed case studies in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador that helped launch a new Inter-American Competitiveness Network through the Department of Commerce/ International Trade Administration and the Organization of American States

- Influenced a new El Salvador multi-year workforce development program through research on how education and training providers can effectively respond to private sector labor needs

- Supported analytical work by the International Food Policy Research Institute in Ecuador, El Salvador, and Peru to define the most promising investment strategies for specific rural micro-regions in order to increase productivity and reduce rural poverty

- Equipped indigenous and other stakeholders in the Andean Amazon with information and tools to participate in democratic decision-making about natural resources and sustainable development

- Trained more than 15,000 people in ways to better manage and benefit from the nationally, regionally, and globally important natural resources in the Andean Amazon

- Supported the successful proposal of 37,000 hectares of Cofan territory as pilot projects in an Ecuadorian payment for environmental services program

- Promoted the formal designation of a new 70,000-hectare municipal reserve, a new category of reserve within Ecuador

- Exceeded the 1.4 million hectare target for biologically significant areas under improved management due to USG support by more than 200,000 hectares

- Influenced multilateral funding flows for infrastructure development through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The IDB adopted guidelines developed by USAID partners that call for mandatory Strategic Environmental Assessments, which will increase rigor and transparency in multilateral infrastructure funding, improving IDB policies, plans, and projects, and benefiting the region as a whole.